

## RECENT LITERATURE.

Turner's Report of his Ornithological Observations in Alaska.\*—We welcome with great pleasure Mr. Turner's long-looked-for report on his ornithological work in Alaska during the seven years (May, 1874-August, 1881) spent there by him as an observer for the U. S. Signal Service. His report covers a wide range of field work and indicates diligent and intelligent labor in an interesting region. The report consists first of the 'Letter of Transmittal,' dated April 25, 1882, the letter being in the nature of a preface or introduction, stating where and under what conditions the work was done, with acknowledgments of assistance in the determination of specimens, etc. From this it appears that the collections were made chiefly at St. Michael's (May 25, 1874-July 14, 1887), Unalashka, and Attu Island. 'Part I.—General Description,' is devoted to an account of the physical characteristics of the country (pp. 13-16). 'Part II.—Meteorology,' is the report on the meteorological observations (pp. 17-59). 'Part III.—Plants,' gives an annotated list of Alaskan plants (pp. 61-85), based largely on Dr. J. T. Rothrock's 'Sketch of the Flora of Alaska,' published in 1867, with, however, numerous and important additions, 'Part IV.—Fishes,' (pp. 87-113, with 15 uncolored plates) has the authority of Dr. T. H. Bean's determinations, with copious and important field notes by the author. 'Part V.—Birds,' occupies pp. 115-196, with 10 colored plates, and is the part of special interest in the present connection. 'Part VI.—Mammals' (pp. 197-208), and a very full index, conclude the volume, which is printed with remarkable accuracy throughout, as regards technical names, for a public document.

Mr. Turner's work on the birds of the region visited was performed under many limitations and difficulties consequent upon the engrossing nature of his other duties. The notes given are, "except in a few instances, the results of my [his] own observations in the field." Several species collected proved new to the North American fauna, and others had previously been special desiderata. The Part devoted to birds consists of two distinct lists, the first, numbering 168 species, and copiously annotated, constitutes the report upon his own special field work; the other is a 'List of the Birds of Alaska,' without notes, and containing all the species "authentically known and recognized" as Alaskan, 269 in number. None are included of which there is "no recorded instance of their occurrence in Alaska."

Mr. Turner's annotations are not to any large extent technical, relating

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\*Contributions | to the | Natural History of Alaska. | — | Results of Investigations made chiefly in the Yukon | District and the Aleutian Islands; conducted | under the auspices of the Signal Service, | United States Army, extending | from May, 1874, to August, 1881. | Prepared under the direction of | Brig. and Bvt. Maj. Gen W. B. Hazen, | Chief Signal Officer of the Army, | by | L. M. Turner. | — | No. II. | Arctic Series of Publications issued in connection with the Signal Service, U. S. Army. | With 26 Plates. | — | Washington: | Government Printing Office. | 1886[= 1888]. 4to., pp. 226, pl. 26.—Birds, pp. 115-196, with 10 colored plates.

mostly to distribution and habits, with occasionally descriptions of bill feet, iris, etc., from fresh specimens, and of plumage, with frequently explanations and comment on the native names, and notes on the uses of the birds made by the natives. The remarks on the breeding habits of many of the species contain much that is new and important. The colored plates, drawn by Messrs. Robert and John L. Ridgway, add greatly to the interest of the work. The species figured, some of them for the first time, are the following: (1) Whiskered Auklet (*Simorhynchus pygmaeus*; (2) Kittlitz's Guillemot (*Brachyramphus kittlitzii*); (3) Turner's Ptarmigan (*Lagopus rupestris atkhensis*, ♂ and ♀); (4) Lapp Owl (*Ulula cinerea lapponica*); (5) Hawk Owl (*Surnia ulula*); (6) White-winged Crossbill (*Loxia leucoptera*, juv., first plumage); (7) Cassin's Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula cassini*); (8) Aleutian Leucosticte (*Leucosticte griseinucha*); (9) Swinhoe's Wagtail (*Motacilla ocularis*); (10) Meadow Pipit (*Anthus cervinus*); (11) Alaskan Wren (*Troglodytes alascensis*); (12) Siberian Chickadee (*Parus cinctus oblectus*); (13) Hudsonian Chickadee (*Parus hudsonicus*).

Although the report was transmitted for publication in 1882, in nomenclature and other technical points it appears to have been brought down to the date of printing (1886) given on the title page, the nomenclature and classification of the A. O. U. Check-List\* having been adopted for the birds. Obligations for assistance and facilities in the preparation of this part of the report are made to Mr. R. Ridgway, Dr. L. Stejneger, and the late Professor Baird.

In closing this notice of Mr. Turner's important contribution to North American ornithology, it gives us pleasure to announce that other belated reports on ornithological work done under the auspices of the U. S. Signal Service Bureau may yet be expected, the volume before us announcing as "in course of preparation" a 'Report upon Natural History Collections made in Alaska in 1887-1881,' by Mr. E. W. Nelson; a 'Report of the Expedition to Lady Franklin Bay,' by Lieut. (now Gen.) A. W. Greely; and a 'Report of Observations made in Ungava and Labrador,' by Mr. L. M. Turner, author of the Report now under notice. While it is to be regretted that these reports become so largely shorn of their freshness and interest by these long delays in making them public, it is gratifying to know that the work of these intrepid explorers is not to be wholly lost to science.—J. A. A.

#### Sharpe's Catalogue of the Family Fringillidæ.†—In a thick volume

\*The numbering of the 'Check-List' is also preserved. On this point we beg to suggest that a continuous serial numbering would in all similar cases be preferable, since it shows at a glance, and without the labor of counting, the number of species treated, while the statement that the A. O. U. nomenclature is followed renders the use of the A. O. U. numbers superfluous.

†Catalogue | of the | Passeriformes, | or | Perching Birds, in the | Collection | of the | British Museum. | — | Fringilliformes: Part III. | Containing the Family | Fringillidæ. | By | R. Bowdler Sharpe. | London: | Printed by order of the Trustees. | 1888. 8vo. pp. xv + 871, pll. xvi. Forming Vol. XII of 'Catalogue of the Birds in the British Museum.'